

Eggplant Cannelloni

with Sunflower Feta and Toasted Garlic Tomato Sauce

This recipe for cannelloni skips the pasta and uses roasted eggplant slices instead, making my version lighter and also grain-free. The filling is made from sunflower feta mixed with lemon zest and olives, so it is vegan as well as well as gluten-free; it's also super bright and totally satisfying. The sunflower feta recipe makes more than you'll need here, but you can use it for many things, so make a big batch and get creative!

2 large eggplants
1 teaspoon coconut oil
½ teaspoon fine sea salt

TOASTED GARLIC TOMATO SAUCE

¼ cup / 60ml cold-pressed olive oil
3 garlic cloves, minced
½ to 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
1 28-oz. / 794g can crushed tomatoes

FILLING

½ cup / 80g kalamata olives
Generous handful of fresh basil leaves
1 cup / 250 g Sunflower Meta Feta (recipe follows)
Fine sea salt

SERVES 4

Preheat the oven to 400°F / 200°C.

Slice the eggplants lengthwise into long, thin strips (about ¼ inch / 0.5cm thick; you should end up with at least 12 slices). Rub the eggplant slices with the coconut oil and sprinkle with the sea salt. Lay them on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Roast the eggplant slices for 10 minutes, flip them, then roast until soft and browned, 5 to 10 minutes more. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, make the sauce: In a medium saucepan, warm the olive oil over low heat. Add the garlic and let lightly simmer until golden, about 1 minute, being careful not to let the oil smoke or the garlic burn.

Add the pepper flakes, salt, and tomatoes; stir well. Taste and adjust the seasonings if necessary. Remove from the heat and set aside, covered, until ready to serve.

Make filling: Remove the pits from the olives and roughly chop. Tear the basil leaves. Mix together the meta feta, olives, and basil. Season with salt.

Place about 2 tablespoons of the filling at one end of an eggplant slice. Roll it up and place it back on the baking sheet, seam-side down. Repeat with the remaining filling and slices. Return the eggplant to the oven to warm, if desired.

To serve, ladle about one quarter of the sauce onto each plate. Top with at least 3 eggplant rolls, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with extra pepper flakes if desired.

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SUNFLOWER META FETA

3 cups raw, unsalted, shelled sunflower seeds, soaked for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight, drained and rinsed

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 large garlic clove

¼ cup / 60ml freshly squeezed lemon juice

1[⁄]³ cup / 80ml water

Place the soaked and drained sunflower seeds, salt, garlic clove, and lemon juice in a food processor. Pulse a few times to break down the seeds. Turn the motor on and drizzle the water into the machine in a thin stream as the mixture is processed. Stop a few times to scrape down the bowl.

You're aiming for the texture of a thick, chunky hummus; add just enough additional water (up to ½ cup / 125ml) to achieve that texture. Transfer the mixture to an airtight container and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes before using. This will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

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